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SHERIFF OF ERIE COUNTY

September 18, 2026

Hon. Kevin Hardwick
Erie County Comptroller
95 Franklin Street
Room 1100
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Travel Reimbursements

Comptroller Hardwick:

Multiple employees of the Erie County Sheriff's Office have in recent months brought to my attention a matter that necessitates this letter. It is part of the mission of the Erie County Sheriff's Office to operate with integrity, fairness, and professionalism. Training is a vital tool that we use to further that mission. As the world around us evolves, the threat to public safety evolves with it. Our deputies and correction officers must remain on the cutting edge of advancements in law enforcement technology, techniques, and tendencies. This is why I encourage my staff to seek out training opportunities that further their professional development and ability to serve the citizens of Erie County. Our legislators support these efforts by approving the Erie County Sheriff Office's travel budget year after year.

As you know, when an employee incurs expenses related to travel for training, the Comptroller is responsible for remitting reimbursement pursuant to policy. It is generally expected that the County will pay in a timely manner. As a matter of fact, New York State is required by state law to pay vendors within 30 days, and if it fails to do so, make interest payments. Disappointingly, I have become aware of several instances in which my staff is not receiving reimbursement in a timely manner. A review of our records shows that out of 61 travel vouchers that have been filled out by my staff and processed this year, reimbursement was received within 30 days only 22 times. In one case, a captain waited 136 days for repayment. This is unacceptable.

Furthermore, your staff has challenged multiple claims without any basis to do so. For example, one of my employees was questioned for parking at the airport prior to a flight for a conference. The Erie County Travel Policy for Employees explicitly states, "When an employee is in an official long-distance travel status, necessary parking charges will be allowed, including fees for parking automobiles at the point of departure/return so long as receipts are provided."

In another example, your team questioned travel reimbursement for one of my School Resource Officers, claiming that the County should not be responsible for those costs. Our contract with the school district this deputy serves says, "The Sheriff will pay for and arrange for initial

training and certification of any newly assigned SRO from a state or nationally recognized provider.” This improperly delayed reimbursement, which my deputy did not receive until 45 days after the voucher was submitted, was avoidable.

The Erie County Sheriff’s Office relies on travel and training to make our deputies the very best in New York State. These county employees are stepping forward to become better public servants for the benefit of our community. It should not take more than a month for them to be reimbursed for those costs. I welcome a collaborative approach to doing better by them. As partners in government, I am confident we can discover a solution.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John C. Garcia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

John C. Garcia
Sheriff of Erie County

cc: Erie County Legislature